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ABSTRACT

This publication summarizes information gained through the 1998 national survey of the Australian Training and Further Education (TAFE) system gathered through a questionnaire sent to almost 121,000 graduates, with a response from 66,500 graduates. Information is provided about TAFE students who completed their courses during 1997 and graduated with a qualification from a course of at least 200 hours or 1 semester, for both the country as a whole and for the eight states and territories. The national survey gathered information on the employment situation of TAFE graduates as of May 29, 1998; their reasons for undertaking the course; relevance of the training to their employment; satisfaction; and further study intentions. Highlights for 1998 include the following: (1) 73 percent of graduates were employed after their course, compared to 58 percent of the Australian working-age population; (2) 46 percent of graduates who were unemployed before their course found work after completing their course; (3) 79 percent of graduates who undertook the course for job-related reasons believed their course to be highly relevant or of some relevance to their current employment; (4) 68 percent of graduates rated the overall quality of their TAFE course as eight or more on a 10-point scale ranging from "extremely poor" to "excellent"; (5) 24 percent of graduates started their TAFE course within 12 months of leaving school; and (6) 49 percent of graduates had a postsecondary school qualification before starting their course. (KC)

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ED 431 122

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AUSTRALIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

TAFE Graduate Destination Survey 1998

at a glance

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What does TAFE offer its graduates?

The survey results suggest that:

- TAFE qualifications increase chances of finding work, advancing careers and increasing salary levels.
- TAFE offers the chance of shifting out of occupations such as labourers (cleaners, factory labourers, other labourers) into the tradespersons occupation categories. Shifting also occurs from clerical and sales type occupations into the associate professional areas such as business and administration, managing supervisors and health and welfare professional areas.
- More women than men tend to change occupations than to advance or seek promotion. Half the graduates with jobs reported benefiting from the course with increased earnings, a promotion, increased status at work or a change of job.
- For those already in the workforce TAFE provides relevant training and meets employed graduates expectations.
- TAFE is not just for school leavers. Close to two thirds of all graduates already have a job before commencing their course, many already have completed some other post-school study and under one quarter are coming to TAFE within 12 months of leaving school.
- More students who graduate from TAFE are entering the TAFE system with a higher education degree. Since the 1995 survey this number has more than doubled. At the same time about one fifth of TAFE graduates going onto further study are choosing to go to university.
- Graduates are generally happy with the overall quality and provision of their course and over three quarters indicated their course helped them achieve their main reason for undertaking the course.

VET in Context

Vocational education and training (VET) courses in Australia are designed to meet the skill needs of industry and employability of students and some courses are specific to unemployed and particular labour market programs. The sector has grown enormously over the past five years with now approximately 1.46 million students in VET and of these just over 1.14 million in vocational programs in TAFE institutions in Australia. In 1998 around $3.0 billion was allocated to the VET sector under the Australian National Training Authority Agreement.

The graduates come from a diversity of social, education and training backgrounds, and are pursuing a range of career and employment pathways. Clients include young people looking for skills to enter the labour market for the first time, people who have lost jobs and need to re-skill for employment, employees upgrading their skills to keep pace with industry changes and people seeking to re-enter the labour market after an extended period of absence.

The programs undertaken by students vary in length, from short modules of just a few hours or days duration, to extended courses that last for a year or even longer. Programs may start at any time during the year, can be delivered in a variety of ways with classes at a college or workplace, external study or self-paced learning. Almost half the VET students in 1997 (46%) undertake only one or two modules or subjects and are not looking to graduate with a full certificate or diploma qualification. At this time this survey only considers those students that have completed a qualification. However, future studies may be extended to include students only undertaking selected modules of a course.

Employment status after graduation

Many TAFE students combine work and study and come to TAFE with current work experience and continue this work and study pattern during their course. Almost two thirds (64.7%) of graduates were employed in the six months prior to commencing their course, 63.6% worked during their course and 72.8% were working at 29 May 1998 (i.e. about 6 months after course completion).

For nearly one quarter of employed graduates (24.5%), their job at 29 May was their first full-time job, almost the same proportion as for the 1997 survey (25.0%). The survey indicated that 58.5% of employed graduates were working with the same employer as they had during their final semester of study. The average weekly earnings for first full-time job holders was $470, an increase of $14 since the May 1997 survey.

Table 1 gives the labour force status at 29 May 1998, some six months after graduation and shows that:

- 72.8 % of graduates were employed, 47.9% full-time and 19.4% part-time.
- Males were almost twice as likely to work full-time (64.2%) than females (34.6%).
- Females were two and a half times as likely to work part-time (26.9%) than males (10.2%).
- Females were more likely to be unemployed (15.9%) and not in the labour force (16.4%) than males.

Table 1: Labour force status for TAFE graduates at 29 May 1998, Australia

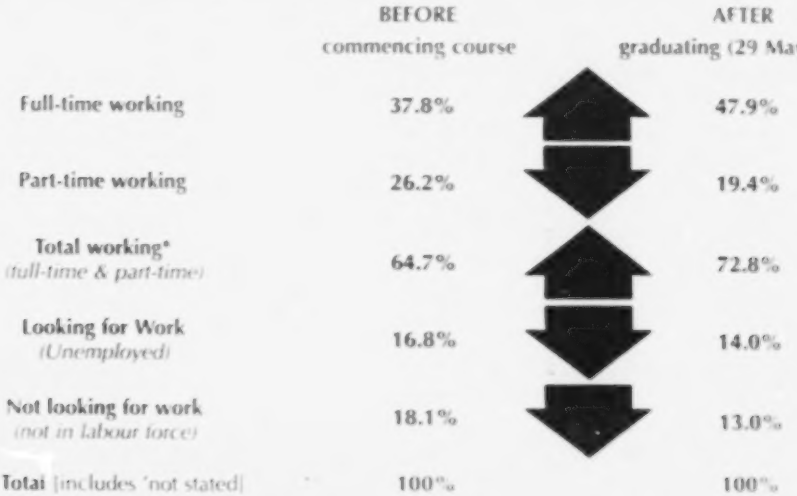
	Graduates 1998			1997
	Males	Females	Total	survey
	%	%	%	%
Employed*:	79.3	67.5	72.8	71.0
full-time	64.2	34.6	47.9	47.3
part-time	10.2	26.9	19.4	19.7
Unemployed:	11.6	15.9	14.0	15.1
seeking full-time work	9.3	9.6	9.5	10.5
seeking part-time work	2.3	6.3	4.5	4.6
Not in the labour force	8.8	16.4	13.0	13.8
Total [includes 'not stated']	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* Employed includes 'not stated' for full-time and part-time.

Compared to the 1997 survey results, the labour market situation for TAFE graduates has not changed significantly. This is not surprising given that the labour market conditions in the Australian economy were relatively stable over the same period with the unemployment rate falling slightly for the total labour force (from 8.7% to 8.1%trend rate) but actually increasing for 15-24 year olds (42.1% of TAFE graduates) from 14.9% to 16.3%[1].

The employment pathways for graduates from before commencing their course to May 1998 are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: TAFE Graduate employment pathways before and after course, Australia 1998



* Total working includes 'not stated' for full-time and part-time.

Other findings related to graduates' employment outcomes included:

- Of those graduates who were unemployed at the time of completing their course, 30.6% found employment within one month and 26.7% took between one and three months.
- 72.5% of employed graduates worked in the private sector.
- 6.3% of employed graduates were conducting their own business.
- 23.8% of employed graduates worked for a small employer (less than 10 employees) and 45.9% for a large employer with 100 or more employees.
- 40.0% of employed graduates had the same employer at 29 May 1998 as before and during their course.
- Average weekly earnings for graduates in their first full-time job was $470 in May 1998, for males it was $493 and for females $430.
- The occupations with the highest weekly salaries for first full-time job holders, are managers and administrators ($703), professionals ($639) and associate professionals ($588) while the lowest are labourers ($417) and elementary clerical, sales and service workers ($393).
- The industries with the highest salaries for first full-time job holders are mining ($709) and communication ($686) while the lowest are retail trade ($403) and agriculture, forestry and fishing ($399).

Occupations at end of May 1998

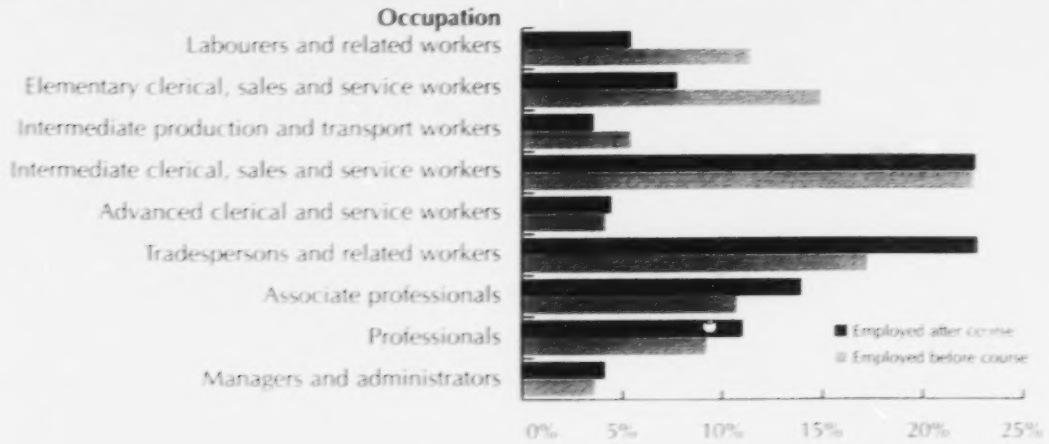
Employed graduates described their occupation and the main tasks performed in their job and on the basis of these data, graduates' occupations were classified according to the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO 2nd edition) and differs from the previous survey which used the ASCO 1st edition.

For graduates employed both before and after their course (May 1998), the greatest occupational shifts occurred for labourers and related workers, where only 36.8% remained in the same occupation. Tradespersons on the other hand showed the least occupational movement with 82.1% remaining in the same occupation. Overall about 38.3% of graduates changed their occupation after completing their course. Major areas of movement occurred in the:

- Labourers and related workers category where nearly one third (31.1%) of employed graduates moved into the tradespersons and related workers category and a further 10.4% moved into the intermediate clerical, sales and service workers category.
- Elementary clerical sales service worker category, where 22.1% of employed graduates moved into the intermediate clerical, sales and service workers category and a further 15.0% into the tradespersons and related workers category.
- Intermediate production and transport workers category, where 23.4% of employed graduates moved into the tradespersons and related workers category.
- Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers, where 8.5% of employed graduates moved into the associate professional's category and 4.8% into the professionals category.

Figure 2 shows occupational status of graduates employed both before starting their course and after their course. The occupations with gains after the training were tradespersons, associate professionals and the professionals groups.

Figure 2: Occupational status of TAFE graduates employed both before and after course completion, Australia 1998



Industry of employment

The employment opportunity for new TAFE graduates is better in some industries than in others. Table 2 below illustrates these differences by comparing the employment of new TAFE graduates across the seventeen major industry groups with the employment pattern for the total Australian workforce across the same industry groups. New graduates from the TAFE sector are over-represented in the health and community services, accommodation, cafes and restaurants, and Government and administration industries. Graduates are under-represented, in the main, in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, the wholesale trade, and the transport and storage industries.

In May 1998, the three industries where most graduates were employed were:

- Retail trade (14.1%);
- Health and community services (13.4%); and
- Manufacturing (12.7%).

Comparisons with the 1997 survey (see Table 2) show slight declines in employment for new graduates in the manufacturing, and health and community services industries. Also almost half (48.1%) of employed graduates in May 1998 were in the same industry before and after their course.

Table 2: Industry of employment May 1998, Australia*

	Employed graduates 1998	1997 survey	Employed persons[1] Australia May 1998
	%	%	%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	2.3	2.8	4.9
Mining	0.9	1.0	1.0
Manufacturing	12.7	13.2	12.8
Electricity, gas, water supply	0.9	1.0	0.8
Construction	7.8	7.4	7.2
Wholesale trade	2.5	2.9	6.2
Retail trade	14.1	13.9	14.5
Accommodation, cafes, restaurants	6.3	7.0	4.9
Transport, storage	2.7	2.9	4.6
Communications	1.1	1.2	1.7
Finance, insurance	2.6	2.9	3.8
Property, business services	9.3	9.3	10.7
Government administration, defence	5.9	5.3	3.9
Education	5.5	5.0	7.1
Health, community services	13.4	14.2	9.6
Cultural, recreational services	2.5	2.5	2.4
Personal, other services	4.3	4.4	4.0
Total (includes 'not stated')	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

*Classified on the basis of the business or service carried out by the graduate's employer according to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classifications (ANZSIC).

AUSTRALIA

Australia

In 1997 there were approximately 1.46 million clients (students) undertaking training in publicly funded VET programs, representing an increase of 4.9% since 1996. The TAFE population was 1.14 million. The survey identified just over 121,000 TAFE graduates with a qualification, an increase of 8.7% since the previous year's survey.

	1998	1997	1995
TAFE Graduates surveyed	120,700	110,400	106,800
Respondents to survey	66,607	60,746	64,703
Female respondents (% of all respondents)	55.1%	56.4%	54.7%
15-24 age group (% of all respondents)	42.1%	41.5%	49.1%
Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander (% of all respondents)	1.5%	1.3%	1.3%
Non-English Speaking Background* (% of all respondents)	31.2%	32.2%	26.8%
Born in overseas country (% of all respondents)	25.1%	26.1%	22.2%
Employed at end May:	72.8%	71.0%	72.5%
Employed in first full-time job (% of employed)	24.5%	25.0%	28.9%
Believed course relevant to job (% of employed)	74.6%	74.5%	72.9%
Occupation** most employed (% of employed):			
- males Tradespersons and related workers	40.8%	39.6%	na.
- females Intermediate clerical, sales and services workers	38.2%	29.5%	na.
- persons Intermediate clerical, sales and services workers	23.8%	T22.9%	T24.9%
Industry most employed (% of employed):			
- males Manufacturing	19.0%	19.9%	18.3%
- females Health and community services	22.8%	23.8%	18.8%
- persons Retail trade	14.1%	H14.2%	12.7%
First full-time job (average weekly earnings)	$470	$456	$414
Enrolled in further study	38.5%	39.4%	39.4%
Overall quality rating of course 'Good' ***	67.8%	67.7%	na.

Notes

* Non-English speaking background: graduate speaks a language other than English at home or one or both parents speak a language other than English as their first language.

** For 1998 occupation classified according to ASCO 2nd edition. Previous used ASCO 1st edition.

T - Tradespersons was the occupation where most were employed for 1997 and 1995 surveys.

H - Health and community services was the industry where most graduates were employed for the 1997 survey.

*** Good = rating of 6 or better out of 10.

Northern Territory

	1998
Respondents to survey	649
Female graduates response	53.6%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	36.9%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	21.7%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	78.9%
Occupation most employed:	
Tradespersons and related workers	24.8%
Industry most employed:	
Government administration and defence	17.6%
Enrolled in further study	37.8%

Western Australia

	1998
Respondents to survey	6,122
Female graduates response (% of respondents)	55.5%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	50.8%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	27.4%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	71.8%
Occupation most employed:	
Tradespersons and related workers	26.7%
Industry most employed: Retail trade	17.3%
Enrolled in further study	39.9%

South Australia

	1998
Respondents to survey	5,876
Female graduates response (% of respondents)	50.2%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	39.3%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	18.1%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	81.7%
Occupation most employed:	
Intermediate clerical, sales and services workers	22.4%
Industry most employed: Manufacturing	13.3%
Enrolled in further study	36.4%

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in Summary

Queensland

	1998
Respondents to survey (% of respondents)	7,576
Female graduates response (% of respondents)	59.1%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	40.4%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	19.2%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	72.4%
Occupation most employed:	
Intermediate clerical, sales and services workers	31.2%
Industry most employed: Health, Community Services	21.3%
Enrolled in further study	39.9%

New South Wales

	1998
Respondents to survey	30,711
Female respondents (% of respondents)	56.8%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	40.6%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	28.4%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	71.0%
Occupation most employed:	
Tradespersons and related workers	24.2%
Industry most employed: Retail Trade	14.3%
Enrolled in further study	40.4%

Australian Capital Territory

	1998
Respondents to survey	1,188
Female graduates response (% of respondents)	54.6%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	42.7%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	32.0%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	73.5%
Occupation most employed:	
Intermediate clerical, sales and services workers	23.7%
Industry most employed:	
Government administration and defence	14.1%
Enrolled in further study	33.7%

Tasmania

	1998
Respondents to survey	1,180
Female graduates response (% of respondents)	42.7%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	50.4%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	8.8%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	81.8%
Occupation most employed:	
Tradespersons and related workers	39.7%
Industry most employed: Manufacturing	20.0%
Enrolled in further study	27.5%

Victoria

	1998
Respondents to survey	13,305
Female respondents (% of respondents)	52.3%
Age 15-24 age group (% of respondents)	43.3%
Born in overseas country (% of respondents)	23.8%
Employed at end May (% of employed)	72.3%
Occupation most employed:	
Tradespersons and related workers	24.9%
Industry most employed: Manufacturing	15.5%
Enrolled in further study	35.1%

Satisfaction outcomes

Graduates were asked whether they thought the course helped them to achieve the main reason for doing their course, whether or not the course was relevant to their employment at May 1998, and to rate the quality of the course on a number of aspects.

77.5% of graduates undertook a course for vocational or job related reasons. Over three quarters of graduates, 78.8%, indicated that their course helped them wholly or partly to achieve the main reason for undertaking the course.

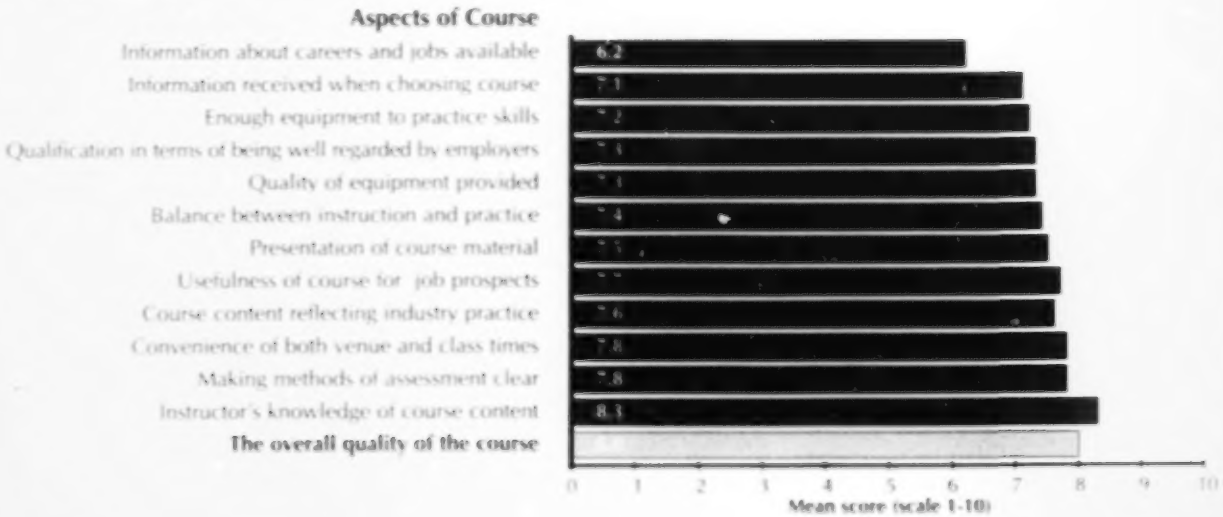
A list of possible employment related benefits of completing the course was provided in the questionnaire and graduates employed at May 1998 were asked to indicate which of these benefits they thought they had received as a result of completing their TAFE course. There were distinct differences in benefits for male and female graduates. Results revealed that:

- 33.5% of employed males and 24.6% of females (overall 28.9%) received an increase in earnings.
- 22.1% of employed males and 17.5% of females (overall 19.8%) received a promotion or increase in status at work.
- 32.5% of employed females and 23.3% of males (overall 28.0%) changed job or obtained employment.

Regarding the relevance of the course to employment, 50.8% of graduates employed at 29 May 1998 considered their course to be highly relevant to their employment while a further 23.8% thought it to be of some relevance. Groups reporting their course to be highly relevant or of some relevance included full-time workers (84.8%), those who did the course for job related reasons (78.5%) and occupations such as managers and administrators (85.3%), tradespersons and related workers (90.6%), professionals (82.9%) and associate professionals (84.8%).

A number of aspects of the course were listed in the questionnaire, including overall quality, and graduates were asked to rate each of these on a scale from one to ten where one was 'extremely poor' and ten was 'excellent' (see Figure 3). The 'overall quality' item resulted in a mean score of eight, with 67.8% of graduates rating 'overall quality' 8 or above.

Figure 3: TAFE course ratings, Australia 1998


Aspects of Course
Information about careers and jobs available
Information received when choosing course
Enough equipment to practice skills
Qualification in terms of being well regarded by employers
Quality of equipment provided
Balance between instruction and practice
Presentation of course material
Usefulness of course for job prospects
Course content reflecting industry practice
Convenience of both venue and class times
Making methods of assessment clear
Instructor's knowledge of course content
The overall quality of the course
6.2
8.3
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Mean score (scale 1-10)

Further study

Almost 4 in 10 graduates (38.5%), indicated that they were enrolled for further studies at 29 May 1998. Of those:

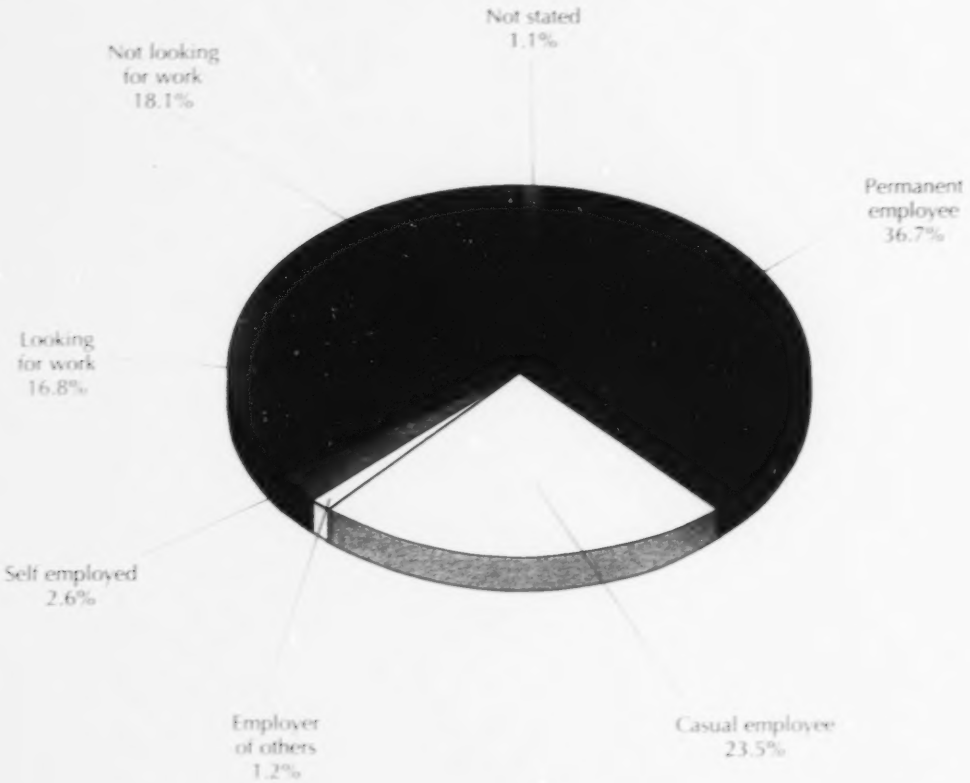
- 67.5% were enrolled to study in TAFE and 23.7% in university.
- 29.0% indicated 'to get a job (or own business)' as the main reason for undertaking further studies followed by 'to get a better job or promotion' (19.5%).
- 40.8% were enrolled in a field of study similar to both their job and course.

Education and work before undertaking course

Graduates were asked their education and employment experiences before commencing their TAFE course. The survey revealed that TAFE is not just for school leavers seeking a first qualification, it also caters for people with prior qualifications wanting to upgrade skills with further study.

Recent school leavers, i.e. students that started the course within 12 months of leaving school, accounted for under a quarter of TAFE graduates (23.5%) and almost half of all graduates (49.0%) had a post-school qualification before commencing their course. Almost two thirds (64.7%) worked either full-time or part-time before commencing their course and the biggest industry group providing employment was the retail trade, with one in five graduates employed in this industry (21.5%). This pattern of work for graduates before commencing their course has not changed significantly since the 1997 survey, when 61.9% worked before their course and the retail trade industry was the biggest employer (21.3%).

Figure 4: Status in employment before undertaking TAFE course, Australia 1998



In relation to education and work before undertaking the course, the survey also revealed that:

- 77.8% of graduates had not studied during the 6 months before commencing their course.
- 4.8% of graduates commenced their course while still at secondary school.
- 53.3% had completed year 12 or equivalent level of schooling.
- 7.7% had a bachelor degree or higher qualification.
- 37.8% were working full-time before commencing their course and 26.2% part-time.
- 16.8% were looking for work before the course and 18.1% were not in the labour force and not looking for work.
- The biggest employers of graduates before they began their course were the retail trade industry (21.5%) followed by manufacturing (12.8%).
- 22.8% of graduates employed before their course were in the intermediate clerical, sales and services workers occupation category followed by the tradespersons and related workers category (16.6%).

About the course of study

Graduates were asked about the course they had undertaken, the main reason for doing the course and their employment during the course. Two thirds of graduates (66.8%) undertook programs in four fields of study – business, administration, economics (28.0%), engineering and surveying (14.9%), health and community services (12.7%) and services, hospitality, transportation (11.2%). There was a slight drop in participation for business, administration, economics services and the hospitality and transportation fields of study. Slight increases occurred for education, engineering and surveying, and science fields of study between the 1997 and 1998 surveys. Most females undertook studies in business and administration (34.4%), health and community services (19.9%), services and hospitality (14.2%) and VET multi-field education (10.4%). On the other hand males preferred business and administration (20.3%), engineering and surveying (30.5%) and, building and architecture (13.5%).

Table 3: Field of study undertaken by TAFE graduates, Australia

	Graduates 1998 %	1997 survey %
Land & marine resources, animal husbandry	3.6	3.9
Architecture, building	6.7	6.4
Arts, humanities, social sciences	6.7	7.0
Business, administration, economics	28.0	28.9
Law, legal studies	0.6	0.4
Education	2.0	1.0
Engineering, surveying	14.9	14.3
Health, community services	12.7	12.9
Science	4.7	3.9
Veterinary science, animal care	0.6	0.5
Services, hospitality, transportation	11.2	12.7
VET multi-field education	8.2	8.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

The majority of TAFE graduates undertake courses leading to a Certificate qualification (81.3%) while 18.7% received a Diploma or Advanced or Associate Diploma. Only 11.0% of TAFE graduates were in Apprenticeship and 2.3% in Traineeship arrangements while undertaking their courses. Table 4 lists the qualifications awarded to graduates.

Table 4: Qualifications awarded to TAFE graduates, Australia

	Graduates 1998 %	1997 survey %
Diplomas and above	18.7	17.9
AQF Certificate IV & equivalent	18.6	17.3
AQF Certificate III & equivalent	28.5	22.4
AQF Certificate II	13.6	11.7
AQF Certificate I	4.8	4.2
Other Certificates	15.8	26.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Other results reported about the course of study include:

- 43.9% of graduates indicated 'paid work' as their main source of income while studying.
- 45.5% of graduates usually attended between 1 and 15 hours of classes each week and 25.4% spent more than 20 hours per week in classes.
- 22.4% of graduates completed their course within 6 months and 50.2% within 12 months.
- 33.0% of graduates reported being granted some recognition for prior learning mostly for previous study at TAFE and to a lesser extent for 'assessed skills and experience'.
- 51.0% of graduates working during their course received employer support such as payment of course fees or time off for study (paid or unpaid).

Graduates were asked to indicate their main reasons for undertaking the TAFE course, with 77.5% indicating vocational or job related reasons. The most popular reason given was 'to get a job or own business' (27.8%). Between the 1997 and 1998 surveys, there was a marginal shift from personal development reasons to vocational and job related reasons for doing the course.

Table 5: Main reason for undertaking TAFE course, Australia

	Graduates 1998 %	1997 survey %
To get a job (or own business)	27.8	28.8
To try for a different career	12.3	12.3
To get a better job or promotion	12.3	12.0
It was a requirement of my job	11.6	10.5
To get extra skills for my job	13.5	13.1
To get into another course of study	6.2	6.4
For interest or personal development	12.7	13.6
Other reasons	2.6	2.5
Total (total includes 'not stated')	**100.0**	**100.0**

Graduates' profile

The demographic profile of TAFE graduates responding to the 1998 survey has not changed markedly since the previous year's survey apart from there being more male than female graduates in the under 25 age group. This trend reflects the national VET participation data. The summary below provides a demographic profile.

In 1998:

- Female graduates comprised 55.1% of survey respondents and 50.3% of the Australian population[2].
- The median age of graduates was 27 years with 42.1% being under 25 years of age compared with the general population where 14.4% are aged between 15 and 24 years.
- 48.3% of male graduates were under 25 years of age while for females it was 37.2%. For those aged over 40 the pattern was reversed where 19.6% were males and 26.2% were females.
- 1.5% of graduates reported being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin compared to 2.2% of the general population[3].
- 25.1% of graduates were born outside Australia which is similar to the Australian population of 23.3%[4].
- 31.2% of graduates were of non-English speaking background (ie. they speak a language other than English at home or one or both parents speak a language other than English as their first language).
- 6.0% of graduates reported some form of disability condition.
- 37.9% lived outside a capital city during their course.
- 7.1% moved from their usual address to do the course.
- 11.3% had 'sole responsibility' for supporting children while studying.

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1 ABS, Labour Force Australia, Catalogue 6203.0, May 1998.
2 ABS, Australian Demographic Statistics, Catalogue 3101.0, December 1997.
3 ABS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population, Catalogue 3231.0, July 1998.
4 ABS, Migration, Catalogue 3412.0, February 1998.